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ABSTRACT

This information sheet (the third in a new government series published for teachers, parents, and others interested in current education themes) offers a brief overview of Reading Recovery, an early intervention program to help low-achieving 6-year-olds learn to read. The information sheet discusses what Reading Recovery is, what its components are, the special features of the program, its results, why it works, where the program has shown results, and where more information can be obtained. (SR)

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Reading Recovery
Education Research Consumer Guide Number 3

Robert L. Thomas

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Reading Recovery

What is it? Reading Recovery is an early intervention program to help low-achieving 6-year-olds learn to read. Originally developed by New Zealand educator and psychologist Marie M. Clay, Reading Recovery provides an alternative to traditional reading practices for educationally disadvantaged and learning-disabled students (Lyons, 1991).

What are the components? There are three main components: The **Diagnostic Survey**, the **Tutoring Session**, and **Teacher Training.** The examiner administers the survey to each child and uses the results when working with each child individually. The tutoring session includes: reading known stories, reading a story that was read one time the previous day, writing a story, working with a cut-up sentence, and reading a small new book. The teacher systematically records what the child is doing, and these observations form the basis for the next lesson. Lastly and most importantly, in a year-long intensive course, teachers are trained in Reading Recovery procedures and in the theories and practices of effective reading instruction.

What are the special features of the program? Children who are among the lowest achievers in reading within a class are selected to receive 30 minutes of daily one-on-one instruction for a period of up to 20 weeks. Reading Recovery instruction has the following characteristics:

- Teachers focus on each student's strengths, not deficits;
- Students learn strategies that help them to become independent readers;
- Students learn to read by composing and writing their own messages;
- Teachers base instruction on detailed analysis of student behavior and knowledge;
- Students are taught how to predict, confirm, and understand what they read; and
- Teachers can select student reading materials from over 2,000 small books of increasing difficulty.

What are the results? Most children who complete the Reading Recovery program can perform within the average achievement range and do not need remedial help again. These children continue to make progress in their regular classroom instruction and in independent reading (Gaffney, 1991).

Why does the program work? Professor Michael Opitz (1991) gives nine reasons why he believes that Reading Recovery is successful, including the following:

- The program is based on a reading theory that emphasizes meaning;
- Children's reading and writing behaviors are thoroughly analyzed, and diagnosis is an ongoing part of instruction;
- Children are taught reading strategies that they apply to connected text; and,

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- Instructors learn to use strategies identified as being characteristic of effective teachers.

Where has this program shown results? The National Diffusion Network (NDN) of the U.S. Department of Education selected Reading Recovery for special recognition and dissemination. To date, the program has been implemented in 38 states, the District of Columbia, four Canadian provinces, Australia, England, and New Zealand (*Reading Recovery Directory, 1992–1993*).

Where can I get more information?

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by Robert L. Thomas

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